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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN
EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Letter dated 8 January 1993 from the Permanent Representative
of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey a briefing on the activities of the rebel movement to obstruct the distribution of relief supplies in the southern part of the Sudan (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly under the item entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

(Signed) Ahmed SULIMAN
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Obstruction by the rebel movement of local
and international relief efforts

Introduction

By virtue of its anomalous and isolated origin, the rebel movement has not been able to endow its activities at the political and military levels with a deserving image free of lapses and atrocities because of the close connection of its development with the scourges of communism, imperialism and zionism from whose morass it imbibed the fundamentals of human enmity and a dark historical hatred for the Arab and Islamic nation.

The ebb of the rebel movement in the political and military arenas has increased its arrogance, excess and tyranny, and it has begun to use food as a political weapon, as reflected in its refusal to allow vessels on the Nile passage to the city of Juba or to other areas under government control, in its obstruction of relief flights by downing United Nations aircraft, in its threat to attack all aircraft flying over Equatoria Province and in its killing of relief officials.

1. Activities of the rebel movement to impede relief

We review hereunder the methods used by the rebel movement to impede local and international relief efforts.

The movement refused to accept the agreement between the United Nations and the Sudan Relief Commission of January 1991 to transport relief supplies to the entire south by all land, sea and air routes, and it threatened to attack relief aircraft.

On 21 July 1992, the movement published a letter it had addressed to the Ambassador of the United States at Nairobi protesting at what it characterized as the use by the Sudanese Government of an aircraft bearing United Nations markings to transport troops and military equipment to the city of Juba between 16 and 18 July 1992.

The movement stated that its artillery was covering the Juba airport area and that because of what had happened it would not henceforth permit United Nations aircraft to land there.

The movement fired at a Russian Ilyushin aircraft operating for the World Food Programme, and a shell landed 50 metres from the place the aircraft was standing at Juba airport.

The relief organization of the rebel movement proposed that camps should be established outside Juba under the supervision of the United Nations, while the spokesman for the movement in London, Richard Moula, stated that they were studying this idea but had not endorsed the proposal.

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On 28 September 1992, forces attacked the headquarters of William Noun causing a large number of casualties who included a worker for the World Food Programme.

On 30 September 1992, the movement announced that the forces of William Noun had killed a United Nations official from Myanmar called Myint Maung and a Norwegian journalist called Helge Hummelvoll and had abducted other officials.

The movement imposed taxes on the companies transporting relief supplies in the south and duties on relief goods and materials and on persons, and this was extended to United Nations organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and voluntary organizations.

In 1991, the rebel movement shot down a relief aircraft belonging to the organization Médecins sans frontières at Aweil.

The movement shot down a relief aircraft at Wau airfield in 1991.

The rebel Alija Moulouk announced that he had reached no agreement with the envoy of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Silović, on the resumption of relief transport.

United Nations envoy Jan Eliasson stated that the shelling of Juba demonstrated that the rebels did not wish relief supplies to reach the south.

The United Nations World Food Programme stated that about 300,000 persons were facing death by starvation because of the siege imposed by the rebel movement.

Mr. Eliasson stated that the United Nations was determined to continue its food assistance programme in the southern Sudan despite the threats of the rebel movement to shoot down aircraft flying over the Equatoria region, and he went on to say that the Organization had in the past sent many humanitarian flights to Juba from Entebbe and Nairobi.

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali expressed his shock at the murder of three international relief officials and a Norwegian journalist in the southern Sudan and said that the rebel movement was responsible for their deaths because the officials in question had last been seen in the custody of rebels.

On 19 September 1992, Mr. Eliasson announced in Nairobi that the Organization had reached agreement with the Government and the rebels to increase the number of relief flights to the southern Sudan. The Organization would make relief flights to some 21 areas in the southern Sudan, including the town of Juba. He added that the humanitarian officials would also be charged with the supervision of relief operations in the field, and he affirmed that the United Nations would endeavour to establish corridors for the distribution of foodstuffs by road and railway.

On 20 September 1992, the Organization stated that it would withdraw from the southern Sudan after the killing of one of its officials and a foreign journalist in mysterious circumstances. Thomas Ekvall said that relief operations in the area near Juba had come to a halt, and an information official at the United Nations said that the entire southern Sudan operation had been halted until further notice and that the United Nations operation held the rebel movement fully responsible for the two murders and for the future safety of all its personnel.

Representatives of the United Nations stated that the World Food Programme had decided to suspend the air bridge to Juba after rebels had shelled two of its aircraft that were unloading cargoes of foodstuffs at Juba airport.

UNICEF stated that duties would not be levied on relief supplies transported by voluntary organizations or Operation Lifeline Sudan, that the north would not charge duties or taxes and that this would have a major impact on relief in the south.

2. Foreign organizations

The two major branches of the organization Médecins sans frontières, one French and the other Belgian, announced that they had halted their activities in the Sudan for security reasons. The local official in charge of the French branch, Jean-Christophe Adrian, stated in Nairobi on 23 February 1992 that the situation in the Sudan had become desperate, that it was impossible to continue relief activities and that the lives of the members of humanitarian teams were in jeopardy. The Belgian branch of the organization announced that it had withdrawn all of its personnel working in the Sudan and had suspended its operations there. This step came a short time after the arrival of Dr. Martin Robert (Netherlands) and Dr. Christine (Belgium) at Nairobi after their abduction in the southern Sudan.

Bob Koepp, director of the office of the Lutheran World Federation, announced that they would travel to Juba only after obtaining the agreement of the rebel movement, because they knew that the rebels now had anti-aircraft weapons.

The American human rights organization Africa Watch expressed its concern at the excesses committed by the rebel movement under the leadership of Garang and at his threat to shoot at relief aircraft at Juba airport. In a statement, the organization said that the threat reflected a clear lack of concern on the part of the rebel movement for the interests of those citizens for whom the movement claimed to be fighting.

The Financial Times newspaper stated that Africa Watch had urged the rebels to return the children being held and reported the assertions of the rebel Lam Akol that the rebel Silvakeir had abducted 3,000 children in order to enlist them in the rebel forces. The organization criticized the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for its neglect of the children and the camps.

Bob Koepp, coordinator of operations for the Lutheran World Federation working in the relief field in the southern Sudan said that the rebels had shelled Juba intensively on 24 August 1992, causing the suspension of the air bridge carrying foodstuffs to it under United Nations supervision.

On 5 October 1992, the newspaper Al Quds reported that the Sudanese Minister of State Mr. Uthman Muhammed al-Hasan had accused the rebel movement of killing three workers for humanitarian organizations in the southern Sudan, namely UNICEF and INTERAID, and a Norwegian journalist. As a result, the humanitarian organizations operating in the south had suspended their operations until such time as the rebel leadership gave an undertaking to guarantee the safety of those providing humanitarian services.

On 21 August 1992, Africa Watch issued a statement in which it enumerated the violations of the rebel movement in the field of human rights, such as dictatorial methods, political detention and the use of children in combat. The organization condemned the statements of the movement to the effect that it had shot down relief aircraft heading for Juba, it considered them a criminal act against the civilian residents of Juba, and called upon the rebel movement to withdraw and apologize for the threat.

The statement further condemned the disappearance of children from the Lokichokio camp in Kenya and accused the movement of abducting them. The organization urged the return of the children, and it accused the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees of shortcomings in its work and negligence in the performance of its duties, which had led to the disappearance of such a number from camps that were supposed to be under its protection.

3. Condemnation of the murder of workers for the Muwaffaq charitable organization

On 27 October 1992, workers for local and international organizations operating in the Upper Nile Province issued a statement condemning the action of the rebel movement in killing workers for their organizations. This had previously happened in Equatoria Province, where workers for the World Food Programme had been murdered, and there was now the murder of two workers for the Muwaffaq charitable organization in Upper Nile Province (Malakal - Aweil village) by the Kujour and Zinyang forces known as the White Army.

Workers for the organizations in question strongly urged their chiefs at their offices in Khartoum to bring the condemnation to the urgent attention of the headquarters of the organizations at Geneva in light of the need for adherence to international covenants prohibiting interference with those working in the human services field or their endangerment at any time or in any place by any armed authority. The statement bore the signatures of representatives of the following local and international voluntary organizations:

1. Relief Commission at Malakal
2. Sudan Aid
3. International Committee of the Red Cross
4. Council of Churches
5. Muwaffaq charitable organization
6. Sudanese Red Crescent
7. Islamic International Relief Organization
8. Islamic African Relief Agency
9. Islamic Call Society

Crimes such as these deserve condemnation and should be followed up by referring them to the highest international levels. A major information campaign should be conducted, aimed at local and regional public opinion, in order to expose the designs of the rebel movement and the fact that it is devoid of all the humanitarian values that it falsely and slanderously claims to be defending.
